

A PERSIAN TREATISE ON FALCONRY.<sup>1</sup>

ALTHOUGH the ancient sport of falconry is still upheld to a limited extent in western Europe, it is to the East that we must turn at the present day if we would see "the pride and pomp and circumstance" that continues to attend a diversion practised from the remotest ages. The Arabs probably learnt the art from the Persians; for not only do many Arabic MSS. state that the first falconer was a Persian, but many of their technical terms relating to the sport are borrowed from the Persian language. In India, too, where hawking has always been popular with the native princes, the text-books (MS. or lithographed) are not in Hindustani, as might be supposed, but in Persian, although very corrupt, and disfigured by Punjabi and Sindhi idioms and technical terms. It is probably for this reason that these MSS. have remained so long untranslated; for it is certain that no one but a Persian scholar, who is likewise a proficient falconer, could attempt the task of translation with any chance of making himself understood.

Col. Phillott, in his preface to another work, the "*Qawānīn*" 's-Sayyād," published last year in the "*Bibliotheca Indica*," says, "Had I not been a practical falconer of more than twenty years' experience of falconry in the East, I would not have ventured to edit the present text." This admission applies with even greater force to the "*Bāz-Nāma-yi-Nāsiri*," of which his translation is now before us; for treating, as it does, of the art of hawking, it is full of technical terms inseparable from the sport, with descriptions of the Persian method of capturing and training hawks, and treating their ailments, which no one but a falconer would properly understand. Thus it would be difficult to find a more competent translator and editor for such a work than Col. Phillott.

We learn from his introduction that the present work is of no antiquity, having been composed in 1868, when the author was sixty-four. It was originally lithographed in Teheran, and a second (and perhaps a third) edition was lithographed in Bombay. The present translation has been made from the Teheran text.

The author was Taymūr Mirzā, a Persian prince of some celebrity, who, in 1836, accompanied by two of his brothers, paid a visit to the court of William the Fourth on a political mission, in which they succeeded, through the good offices of Lord Palmerston, eventually returning to Baghdad. Devoted from his youth to field sports, the author was well received by the Shāh (Nāsir 'd Dīn Shāh), and became a constant companion in his sporting expeditions. In

Persia and around Baghdad the name of Taymūr Mirzā is still "a household word." It was not until quite late in life that he began to think of writing down his experiences as a falconer, to leave "as a memento for all lovers of the sport, whether tyros or experts." "Sixty-four years of my life," he writes, "have now passed, all spent in hunting and shooting. I have had no hobby but sport, no recreation but it." He died in 1874 at the age of seventy.

His work, relating as it does to a special branch of sport, naturally appeals most strongly to those for whom it was designedly written; but, putting aside



FIG. 1.—From an Old Persian Painting, probably of the Mughal Period. From "*The Bāz-Nāma-yi-Nāsiri*: a Persian Treatise on Falconry."

technicalities, the general reader cannot fail to be amused with the anecdotes which are told of sport in Persia, as well as with the quaintness of oriental diction. Thus, speaking of a worthless hawk that defied his best efforts as a trainer, the author says (p. 39), "What could be the cause of her extraordinary behaviour? Puzzled and perplexed, I buried my head in the collar of reflection determined to unravel the tangled skein of the difficulty," &c.

To criticise any of the methods or devices of Persian falconers would here be out of place, though there are many passages which suggest comment. The

<sup>1</sup> "*The Bāz-Nāma-yi-Nāsiri*, a Persian Treatise on Falconry." Translated by Lieut.-Col. D. C. Phillott. Pp. xxiv+195. (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1908.) Price 21s. net.

Persian fowlers, like their Indian confrères, are adepts in the art of snaring, and it is curious to note that one of their devices for capturing a wild hawk at night by means of a lantern (p. 75) is, with slight variation, to be found in the "Book of St. Albans, 1486." Similarly a recipe for a slow-moulting hawk (p. 151) is also prescribed in that famous work of *Jalyana Berners*. To explain such unexpected coincidences would take us now too far afield.

A valuable feature in the present translation is the number of footnotes which Col. Phillott has supplied, to explain and illustrate the Persian writer's meaning, to reconcile apparent discrepancies, or to confirm his statements from his own experience. To English readers interested in the literature of falconry, these footnotes will prove very instructive. The illustrations which accompany the text are of two kinds—reproductions of Persian drawings of hawking scenes, and



FIG. 2.—Young Passage Saker (Dark Variety). From "The Bāz-Nāma-yi Nāsiri: a Persian Treatise on Falconry."

photographs from life of hawks employed by Persian falconers. The reader is here presented with a sample of each.

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#### DR. SVEN HEDIN ON CENTRAL ASIA.

THE April number of the *Geographical Journal* contains two papers by Dr. Sven Hedin descriptive of his journeys through Tibet in 1906-8. The first of these is a narrative of his travels, which is necessarily so much abridged that it barely does more than give an idea of the extent and difficulties of his exploration; the other is a summary of the most important, or, rather, what Dr. Hedin regards as the most important, of his discoveries. The two are not necessarily identical, and it may be that when we have the full account of his travels the

NO. 2065, VOL. 80]

discoveries to which he now attaches greatest importance may prove of minor interest. For the present, however, we have only this summary, in which he enumerates the four most important results of his journey as the discovery of (1) the true source of the Brahmaputra, (2) the source of the Indus, (3) the "genetic" source of the Sutlej, and (4) the discovery of a continuous mountain chain, to which he applies the name Trans-Himalaya.

Of these the two first are of interest, especially the fact that no part of the drainage of the Kailas mountain finds its way into the Indus river; the third is a doubtful discovery, for though Dr. Hedin has discovered and visited the source of the largest of the feeders of the Manasarowar lake, it cannot in any proper sense of the word be regarded as belonging any longer to the drainage area of the Sutlej river. At one time there was continuous flow from Manasarowar to Rakas Tul, and again from that to the Sutlej, but this latter has been dry for at least half a century, while the former seems to have become intermittent and likely to cease in the near future; except for a possible escape by underground percolation, no part of the water of these lakes now finds its way into the river, and even this supposititious communication would not justify us any longer in describing a tributary of either of the lakes as the source of the Sutlej, nor does the matter seem much bettered by the addition of the adjective genetic.

The most important, in his own view, of Dr. Hedin's discoveries, and the one around which controversy has settled, is that of a great continuous mountain range, coextensive with and parallel to the Himalayas, to which he has given the name Trans-Himalaya, a name to which exception has been taken, and which seems to require greater justification than Dr. Hedin has given. We may ignore the objection that the term was applied by Cunningham to the mountains lying between the Sutlej and the Indus, but we cannot accept the quotations from other authors cited as justification for the use of the term. A writer from the Indian side may use, with perfect correctness, the expression Trans-Himalayan, as applied to the country, or to explorations carried out, on the further side of the Himalayas, but it is a different matter when we are asked to accept the words as a definite geographical term, and once this proposal is brought forward the two questions arise as to whether the word is either justifiable in itself, or necessary. Of these two questions the first is a literary one, and it must be confessed that some real objections may be urged against the word adopted by Dr. Hedin, and accepted by Lord Curzon of Kedleston; but the second is the important one, for, unless the supposed range of mountains to which it is applied has a real individuality and independent existence, no special term is required or can be justified.

From earliest times it has been recognised that the great system of mountains which rises to the north of the Indo-Gangetic plain has an individuality of its own which deserves and requires a name, and the word Himalaya, originally applied to a part, has been extended to the whole chain of snowy peaks together with their dependent mountains of lower elevation. It has not, however, been so generally recognised that this unity belongs less to the mountains than to the plain at their foot, and some modern geographers, not content with merely recognising the individuality of the great chain, have attempted to trace the individual ranges of which it is composed along the whole length of the system, and thereby have retarded a proper appreciation of the true nature of this system of mountains. A simile proves nothing,